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SYSTEM  
OF  
TEMPORAL RETRIBUTION,

VINDICATED

BY VARIOUS CONSIDERATIONS,

DRAWN FROM

SCRIPTURE AND OBSERVATION.

BY THE

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"BE SURE YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT."

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## TEMPORAL RETRIBUTION.

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NUMBERS XXXII. 23.

"BE SURE YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT."

### INTRODUCTION.

It is no heresy to affirm that the opinions of mankind in regard to the doctrine of *a special providence*, are generally vague, fluctuating, and superficial—and very commonly are quite erroneous and false. It is natural enough that this should happen in the case of the *sceptic* or *free-thinker*. He labours to expunge the being and attributes of a God from the scheme of things. He endeavours to disprove the likelihood of a system of *final retribution*. He impugns the notion of rewards and punishments in a world to come. What he denies to the future, it is not strange that he should deny to the present also. It is natural and consistent that he should refuse to see in the plan of the world as it is, that system of retributive justice which he will not allow to enter into the arrangements of a future state. Neither is it singular that the *practical unbeliever* should be slow to discern, and loath to admit, the symptoms of such a scheme in the mechanism of this lower world. His thoughts flow in quite

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another channel. His mind is absorbed by other speculations. His heart is enslaved by sense and sensible objects. He is too much the creature of material impulse and animal delights, to canvass topics that exact self-inspection and forethought. He is too much accustomed to look only to that which appeals to gross selfishness, or ministers to immediate enjoyment, to occupy himself with things pure, intellectual, and abstract. His mind has lost the edge and fineness that are requisite for such inquiries. Besides, it consists not with what he thinks his interest, to investigate subjects that would rebuke him to the face—that would run counter to his present views of life—that would break in upon his false security—that would denounce him as impure—earthly—short-sighted and ungodly. But what is passing strange, is, the doubt, the darkness, and even the indifference, testified in regard to this singularly curious, and awfully momentous question, *within the pale of the true church of Christ.*

Among the variety of classes of men and shades of opinion that are comprised within the compass of the visible church, it is a common occurrence to find those who admit a close special providence, and whose feelings even echo the scripture which declares the very hairs of the head to be numbered. But when the creed of those who make this high profession is accurately tested, it frequently appears to be more ostensible than real—their specious faith often seems to be strongly tinctured with superstition—their belief proves to be after all blind and vague. It looks to be rather the offspring of easy credit than of deliberate scrutiny—rather the result of timidity than of knowledge. They are unable to trace out the features of the system in which they avow a

sweeping and implicit confidence—and hence it exerts not that practical influence on their conduct, which would be the effect of a faith more accurate, more enlightened, and more experimental. These however with all their imperfections belong perhaps to the highest rank of ordinary professing christians. Again, it is no rare event to meet with those who acknowledge a high veneration for the power and wisdom of the Almighty, who admit that he has power sufficient to ordain, knowledge to foresee what is to come to pass, and who in a general manner are ready to acquiesce in all that the Scriptures allege on these heads—who yet when their creed is probed and examined, are found to be devoid of any well grounded, rational and consistent belief in a system of terrestrial retribution, which would seem a necessary consequence of their professed opinions, and equally wanting in that course of strictly holy practice which would be the fruit of the doctrine were it sincerely held.

Still more common is it in the church to encounter those, who endowed with a large share of sentiment and credulity, with a very moderate portion of judgment and reason, have not the ability to form one clear notion as to the character of the system in question, but instead of this give themselves up to a blind faith in an over-ruling providence—so blind that it often differs in nothing from the fatalism of the infidel and the heathen. There is still another class of very frequent occurrence, who lay great stress on the fact that a system of *future* rewards and punishments is plainly developed in the scriptures, who make this their main argument for a holy life, but who discern not in the present any traces or symptoms of a plan similar to that which they observe in the hereafter—nay, who are wont to set the exact order of the

future reckoning, in vivid contrast with what they conceive the want of order in the present world. And again there is a class better instructed than the former, who not only admit all which the scriptures advance as to a final judgment, but who allow in addition, that the marks of a scheme of temporal retribution are discernible in the pages of the sacred volume. These are the most reasonable and erudite that are commonly to be found within the circumference of the church of God—yet even they according to our view want something of what is necessary to a complete system. They make a distinction, tacit or avowed, between the *old* and the *new* method of God's providence. They regard the scriptures as describing a plan of things which obtains not on the earth since the Canon was closed. They suppose a break in the scheme—a want of continuity in the procedure of the moral universe of God.—By so thinking they virtually make Jehovah to be mutable and inconsistent—they disturb what in another aspect seems harmonious and regular—they remove a great motive to virtue, by discountenancing the notion of a present retribution, and by postponing such a scheme until this world shall be brought to a close. These, and many other shades of doctrine, are to be seen among the people of God. But what is seldom to be found, is, that scheme of doctrine to which we allude, which, embracing all the other scriptural incitements to holiness, makes a full and enlightened estimate of the motive of temporal retribution—and employs it as an efficient and practical assistant in the life of faith. Believing that there is a flaw in this branch of theology—that the matter is loosely handled in most treatises—that it is too much disparaged by thinkers, and too little recognised by christians in

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general, we are desirous to draw the attention of theologians to this neglected point. If our opinion be sound, and if the following pages shall succeed in directing the feelings of the christian public to this matter, we shall consider that we are doing a service to the theory and practice of religion. We consider that to trace out the features of a plan of retributive justice on the earth is to give prominence to a doctrine which has been much overlooked—is to exhibit a continuity in the regulations of the Most High—is to connect earth and heaven more closely together—is to show a likeness between things as they were and things as they are—is to prove a resemblance also between things present and things to come—is to display the finger of God manifestly put forth where even christians are apt to miss seeing it—and is to demonstrate this world to be the inferior tribunal to that high chancery of heaven, wherein we are assured that strict justice is to be laid to the line, and strict equity to the plummet.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A SYSTEM OF TEMPORAL RETRIBUTION CLEARLY DIS- CERNIBLE IN THE SCRIPTURES.

The inspired volume may be likened with sufficient propriety to a piece of mechanism with the cover removed, permitting the wheels with their connections and evolutions to be examined and ascertained. *It is in its leading particulars the system of the moral universe as it now exists, with this addition that the motives of the agents are laid bare, and the causes of the dis-*

pensations, that besell them are labelled. Compared with the present scheme, it is, as it were, a glass hive which permits the movements of the beings within to be clearly surveyed. Now it can scarcely be disputed that when we look into it, we see it pervaded from the beginning to the close by a scheme of present retribution.

The first couple transgress the laws given them as the rule of life, and swift judgment descends upon them,—they are cast out of the paradise which before was their domain. The punishment inflicted upon them was entailed upon all their posterity. And we might take our stand upon this single circumstance, and might show that the very fact of *original sin* inflicted on mankind with all its concomitant sorrows and sufferings, is of itself a standing token, and evidence of terrestrial retribution. But we pass onward. Cain, the eldest born of the first man, sheds the blood of his innocent brother. The anger of the Almighty alights upon him with heavy vengeance,—for he is doomed to be throughout the period of the long life of antediluvian men, an outcast from the society of his fellow beings. The men before the flood abusing the privilege of long life, provoked the Most High by the awful depravity of their doings. The fountains of the great deep were opened,—the heavens poured down torrents of water, and the ungodly race was swept from the face of the earth which they had polluted. Noah, the survivor of this fearful judgment, though an upright man in his general deportment, sins by drunkenness, and one of his three sons who forgot the reverence due to his parent, has a curse denounced against him and his descendants. The pride of men again mounts high, and they combine together to build a tower whose summit should touch the heavens, and

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admit them into the mansions of the upper world. Punishment comes down upon them, their plan is hindered, and they who before formed but one people are separated into tongues and nations. Abraham, the father of the faithful, is guilty of a falsehood in his intercourse with Abimelech, and is convicted and reproved by that prince. The wife of Lot disobeys a positive commandment, and, fearful judgment, is turned into a pillar of salt. Hagar is elated by her privileges, and is driven forth an exile from the house of her master. The cities of the plain push iniquity to its highest excess, and he who once swept away a godless generation by a flood of waters, in this instance rained down fire and brimstone from the heavens on the daring offenders. Rebecca, led astray by maternal partiality, imposes on her husband, and obtains the blessing for the younger son. She is punished for the fraud by the dissension which broke out in the household, and by the departure from his home of him whom she favored. Joseph, for his youthful vanity, is driven from his home, and forced to pass through many mischances before the sun of prosperity again shines upon him. His brethren, too, are sharply visited for their jealousy and cruelty, by the fear, the remorse, and the shame to which they were exposed in the sequel. The language of Judah (when Joseph feigned anger against him and his brethren) tells very pointedly his belief that sin is followed by a sure retribution. "And Judah said, what shall we say unto my Lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants." Pharaoh and his people deal harshly with the Israelites. They are warned, they are entreated, they are visited with plague upon plague, and at length, be-

cause of their inveterate disobedience, the monarch and his host were swallowed up in the waters of the Red sea. The chosen people, in their passage through the wilderness, sinned frequently and provoked their God to anger. They are punished by hunger and thirst, fire belched forth from the bowels of the earth, and consumed some of the offenders,—a plague came down upon them, fiery serpents invaded their camp, and stung great numbers of the people, their journey was drawn out into a weary wandering for forty years in a barren desert, and finally there were but two of that whole generation who were suffered to enter into the land of promise. Moses and Aaron, the two leaders of the host, although faithful in the main, yet having sinned, the one by anger, and the other by countenancing the people in their idolatry, are not permitted to set foot on Canaan. Sometimes the Lord interposed in a special and peculiar manner to discover and punish the guilty. Thus Achan who, contrary to express command had reserved to himself part of the booty taken at Jericho, is found out by the casting of lots, and confessing the crime is stoned to death along with all his family in the presence of the people. The sons of Eli disgrace the office of the priesthood by their unholy acts, a sentence from on high is pronounced against them, and they are slain as they bore the ark in battle with the Philistines. Balaam contends against Israel in spite of God's command to the contrary, and in return for his frowardness is killed in battle. The whole career of Saul bears testimony to a system of temporal retribution. Throughout his reign he was guilty of continual declensions from the law of that God who had given him the sceptre, and accordingly he was visited with frequent reverses, his un-

checked passions distempered his mind, and subjected him to seasons of madness and frenzy, his life is poisoned with jealousy, fear and remorse, the grave yields up its dead to reprove him for his wickedness, and at length when he had refused reproof and persisted in sin, he dies by his own hand on the field of battle. David, the man after God's own heart, is guilty of the heavy offences of adultery and murder. He is *expressly* punished by the death of the child, the fruit of the criminal connection, and there was a series of misfortunes from this time to the close of his reign which were sent as further chastisements of his dark crimes. Achitophel assists Absalom in his rebellious schemes against his father, takes umbrage at that prince, and hangs himself. Joab is guilty of deeds of wanton violence and bloodshed. Prosperity attends him throughout the reign of David, but under Solomon his sin finds him out, and he who had "shed the blood of war in peace" is in his turn slain by the sword. Solomon carries too far the indulgence given the Jewish monarchs of a plurality of wives. His wisdom raised him above their evil influence during the vigor of his life, but in his declining years his wives become a snare to him, seduce him to adopt their idolatrous practices, and leave it a matter of considerable doubt whether the wise king really died in the faith of his fathers. Rehoboam with youthful rashness prefers the counsels of his juvenile advisers to the ripe wisdom of the old men, and by so doing occasions division in the nation, so that Israel and Judah are formed into separate kingdoms. Jeroboam encouraged his people in the worship of idols, and in consequence, the favor of the Lord departed from him and his household and kingdom. Ahab and Jezabel favored the false

prophets, insulted the prophets of the Lord, practised oppression, fraud and cruelty, and they are notably punished for their dark offences, the one is slain in battle, the other is cast from her window and devoured by the dogs. The princes and the people in general having through many generations grievously departed from the law of the Lord, they are carried into captivity in Babylon, where during seventy years they endure all the bitter evils of exile, bondage and oppression. Nebuchadnezzar insults the majesty of heaven by his pride, ambition and ungodliness. He is cast down from his high place, and he who aspired to be equal to Jehovah is debased below the condition of the meanest among men, being doomed during seven years to herd with the beasts of the field, to feed with them on the same fare, and to repair with them to the same caverns. The enemies of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego conspire against them, and cause them to be thrown into a vast fiery furnace. The three righteous men are preserved by a special and wonderful miracle, and they who sought their destruction are themselves consumed in the same furnace. Belshazzar, forgetful of the warnings and the judgments that befell his grandsire, exhibits the same overweening arrogance, conjoined with profligacy and profanity. Vengeance descends upon him in the hour of his loftiest pride and exaltation. As he sat in the midst of his nobles and captains, rioting in drunkenness, sacrilege and licentiousness, a spectral hand is seen by him to write his doom in mystical characters on the wall, the sentence is expounded to him by the prophet of the Lord, and that very night his city was taken and sacked, he himself was slain, and his kingdom was given to another. Haman cherishes a deadly jealousy against

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the upright Mordecai, and carries hatred so far as to erect a gallows on which he proposes to hang the object of his enmity. His dark schemes are discovered and turned against himself, and he and his sons are hanged on the gibbet which he had prepared for another. Jonah is commanded to bear a message to Nineveh. He rebels against the order, and thinking to flee from the presence of the Lord, takes ship for Tarshish. He is arrested in his attempt, the ocean is made the scene of his detection and his punishment, he is cast into the deep, he is swallowed up by a great fish, he continues three days in the belly of the monster, and he is not released from his prison until he gives tokens of penitence, and cries aloud to the Lord for pardon.

We forbear to bring forward a multitude of other examples, the mention of which would lead us into too long a detail. The Jewish commonwealth was a *theocracy* of which Jehovah was the declared, acknowledged, *visible* ruler. There runs through this history a system of strict retributive justice, whereof the God of Jacob is the administrator. Within the pale of this peculiar dispensation, virtue met its recompense and vice its punishment with a regularity that was at once unfailing and notorious—promises were proclaimed, wherein temporal blessings were held forth as the reward of holiness,—threatenings were published, wherein temporal punishments are announced as the fruit of disobedience. The history of the Jewish nation is a faithful commentary on the truth alike of the promise and the threat. It is the narrative of the proceedings of a tribunal, administered with a justice, that was accurate and impartial in the highest degree. Already, ere the career of the nation was far advanced, we see

Moses their guide appealing to this principle, pointing to the system which the Almighty had pursued in the past time towards his people, comparing it with the declarations he had uttered, noting the agreement of the two things, and strong in the conviction that the system was stable, pronouncing this memorable sentence,—

"Be sure your sin will find you out."

The history of the Jews as a distinct people, runs on through nearly fifteen centuries after this time. The nation is presented to us under very different attitudes, under judges, under kings, in peace and in war, victorious and vanquished, prosperous and afflicted, at home and abroad, free and in bondage. Their annals include many various aspects—the proceedings of the nation at large, the doings of individuals whether kings or prophets, warriors or statesmen, or men of low degree. But whatever be the aspect, situation or period in which we view their history, we are met at once by the principle in question, and we are immediately struck by the evident fact of a plan of close retributive justice, dispensing blessedness to the good, and chastisement to the ungodly. Nay more, in every situation we observe the people alive to this scheme, admitting it in opinion, however weakly it may influence their conduct. And we notice their teachers and prophets constantly bringing up the fact, employing it as a motive of action, doing so contradicted, and vindicating it by surveys of the past history of the nation. The New Testament ushers in a dispensation which in many leading circumstances differs essentially from the older plan. Thus the law of retaliation is done away—the temple worship with its manifold forms and observances is abrogated—the ministration of the holy spirit is brought in to supersede the ministr-

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tions of prophets. These and many other alterations are introduced. But in spite of such changes the plan of temporal retribution appears as obvious on the face of the new dispensation, as it did on the pages of the old. The period embraced in the historical portion of the New Testament is short—it is principally engrossed by the actions and discourses of our Lord, and the other personages who appear on the scene are neither so numerous nor so prominently brought forward as in the case of the agents in the Old Testament. Hence it is not possible to illustrate our position by so many examples as formerly—still there are enough to sustain the argument. Peter denies his master, and is punished by a remorse so poignant that it seems to have remained fresh on his memory through the whole of his subsequent career. Judas betrays the Lord for thirty pieces of silver, and, most horrible of all dooms, murders himself in hopeless and unappeasable remorse. Herod, inflated with pride, lends an ear to the voice of flattery which tells him that he is a God and no man. The angel of the Lord smites him, and he is eaten of worms—fit punishment for a worm that so far forgot its weakness as to aspire to be God. Ananias and Sapphira insult the holy apostle by a deliberate falsehood, and are struck dead on the spot. Elymas the sorcerer practises his black art, and resists the truth—at the command of the apostle he is seized with blindness. Jerusalem which had turned a deaf ear to the signal words and works of Jesus, and in the full rankness of her wickedness had crucified the Lord of glory, is visited with a destruction so fearfully intense, that since man was or cities were built, there is nothing like it in the history of our world. Thus through a course of 4,100 years, which is more than two thirds

of the whole period that has elapsed since time began, and throughout the whole narrative of two dispensations which differ exceedingly in many of their most prominent characteristics, are to be discerned the traces of a system of temporal retribution. Can any definite reason be assigned, why a scheme that endured so long, should suddenly have been overturned? Can a sufficient cause be alleged, why a mode of procedure that evidently obtained during 4,100 years, should not suit the last 1840 years? Is the Supreme Ruler so mutable in his arrangements that it is more natural to conceive the system to be altered, than that it should continue what it was? Is it not more agreeable to what we know of the character of the Almighty to believe, that his course of action remains uniform, and runs in the same direction, except when there are the most obvious reasons for a new order? We shall consider that the clear and continuous evidence of the scriptures—the unbroken testimony of forty centuries—the absence of any intimation that the system of things is altered—the want of any proof that such a change would be beneficial or necessary—we shall conceive that these facts go far to establish the argument—and in any case that they set us forth on our inquiry, with the strong likelihood of finding that the system for which we contend, is the actual system of the moral universe as it now subsists.

## CHAPTER II.

### TEMPORAL RETRIBUTION EXERCISED THROUGH THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF CONSCIENCE.

If it be true that there exists in the mind a perception of right and wrong, with a tendency to bestow a feeling of approbation upon actions of the one class, and a feeling of blame upon actions of the other—then in the very degree in which this obtains, does God confer a reward upon virtue, and inflict a punishment upon vice through the sentiments of the moral agent. It matters not whether this be done by the operation of a peculiar moral faculty distinct from the others, or whether it be simply the reason which pronounces the verdict; the consequence so far as our argument is concerned is the same. If there be an innate tendency in man of whatsoever sort, to receive satisfaction when doing well, and to feel compunction when doing evil, then in the precise measure that this happens does God who adjusted this piece of mechanism in the mind, exercise a sensible control over the procedures of the moral world. Now there has never been any doubt so far as we know as to this *general* point. Discussion has commonly turned on the *minor* question, what is the nature of the moral power. The grand fact that there is such a power or tendency, has been admitted by all except by sceptics who are disposed to impugn whatever others are inclined to believe. Now this is to bring the Supreme Ruler into very close connection with the affairs of the moral empire on earth. The workman who puts together a piece of mechanism, designing that it should produce

such and such effects, has the nearest possible concern in these effects when accomplished—and such is the relation that subsists between the Almighty and his moral world, through the medium of that peculiar structure which he has organized in the mind of men. The transactions of this inner tribunal have the mightiest influence on the happiness and comfort of the man. When a verdict of approbation is given by it, the bosom is filled with a glow of satisfaction which nothing else can afford—when a sentence of condemnation is pronounced, there is often a degree of misery inflicted of the most intense and agonizing kind. So there is this, that when you look into the moral code of any nation which is sufficiently advanced in knowledge to have such a code formally drawn out, you are sure to find it laid down, that the chief element of true happiness is a conscience void of offence—a mind at peace with itself. So widely spread is this opinion, that it may be found alike in the regions of the north and south, of the east and west—in the ethereal systems of the fantastic Chinese or fanciful Hindoo—in those of the mystical Persian or superstitious Egyptian—in the code of the subtle Greek or haughty Roman—with the Icelander in his regions of perpetual frost, or the splendid Mexican enshrined amid the luxury and magnificence of the torrid zone. The opinion has been found throughout this wide sphere, and so far from weak has been its influence, that men are rather to be censured for having pushed it to an extravagant excess. The ambitious stoic was so full of it, that he made all happiness or misery to lie within the domain of the mind itself, and denied that things external could have any influence over the truly wise man. In his vain-glorious system, the mind

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proudly looked down from her lofty pinnacle upon the petty influences of earth, and awed each event into an attitude of subjection, and imparted to each circumstance her own coloring and shape. According to his creed, when the mind is fitly disciplined and sublimed, outward things lose the ability to affect its feelings—it becomes like a rock on which the surges dash in vain—a well tempered shield that blunts and flings aside the weapons that touch its polished surface. Thus armed and defended, riches and poverty, high or low estate, heat and cold, bodily pleasure and bodily pain, peace or war, in a word all those influences which are generally supposed to exert a strong empire over the feelings, become things nominal and matters indifferent. There were other sects in the east and west that held a philosophy almost as aspiring—and there were men belonging to their schools whose conduct, in many instances, was so close a commentary on their doctrines, as to give wonderful vogue and credit to systems which did great violence to truth and to human nature. The wild Góth and wilder Indian, *practical stoics* both of them, stood within the circle of their implacable foes, endured the knife, the jagged arrow, the red hot pincer and the molten lead, they laughed at the weak endeavour to give them pain, they said that the women of their tribe could better act the executioner, they promised their enemies that when they should be taken by the men of their nation, that they should then be taught to inflict the torture. We mention these particulars, with a view to show both in the savage and the sage, how potent is the notion that the mind holds the balance of pleasure and pain, and that its awards have the largest influence on the happiness or misery of the man.

We have already drawn examples from the scriptures in illustration of one position—we might also derive instances from the same source in proof of the influence of conscience to afford pleasure and pain. Adam breaks faith with his Maker, and overcome by shame and fear, hides himself from the face of his offended God—Cain slays his brother, and not daring to reply directly to the question, "Where is thy brother?" replies to it by an evasive answer, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Nay, so keen are the upbraiding of his conscience, that when he is condemned to be an outcast, he said, "Whosoever findeth me shall kill me." Jacob after an interval of twenty years, dreads to meet the brother whom he defrauded of his birthright. The sons of Jacob, when nearly thirty years had passed by without any special punishment of their guilt, are observed to tremble with the fear that judgment was about to come upon them at last. Saul pursues after David, and is taught his own wickedness by the generosity of his antagonist. David commits a dark crime, and Nathan the prophet reaches his conscience by narrating his guilt under a fictitious tale. Belshazzar surrounded by the wealth, the dignity and the power of the Babylonish empire, calmly endured a most severe reproof from Daniel, old, unsupported and a captive, for guilty conscience confirmed the justice of the reproof. The young man who inquired of our Lord what he should do to inherit eternal life, went away sorrowful when probed in the sensitive point, and commanded to sell his goods. Peter when no one spake to him, or reproached him for his treachery, went out and wept bitterly. Judas although supported by the rulers of the city, and the chief men of his country, found their patronage no protection against the torments

of a guilty conscience, and went and hanged himself. Paul, though he had long hardened his heart against the doctrines and followers of the new way, could not resist the appeal, "Paul, Paul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks,"—he sank to the ground overwhelmed by remorse and fear. Felix, the governor and the judge, quailed before Paul the prisoner and the accused; it is said of him that he trembled when Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come. The effects of a guilty conscience are powerfully delineated in that passage of the Apocalypse, wherein the wicked flee from before Messiah come to judgment. "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

So great is the influence of conscience, so mighty is the ability of the mind to render the man supremely happy or supremely wretched, that when poets and romancers have cast about in search of subjects for their tales, they have been so struck by the fitness of this one as to employ it in numberless examples. Ancient and modern writers have given a great variety of draughts of the man at peace with himself, and the man harassed by the upbraiding of the monitor within. According to their delineation the existence of the one is a perpetual round of new delights. There is a gladness within his soul which communicates its own coloring to all around. He is in friendship with God, with man,

and with nature. For him the sun seems to shine more brightly than for others, the birds sing more sweetly, the fountains ripple more melodiously, and the gales blow more gently. Every evening finds him disposed for balmy slumber, and each morning awakens him braced and ready for the toils and pleasures of a new day. His thoughts move harmoniously onward, and his countenance, faithful mirror of his soul, is overspread with serenity, or lighted up with the placid smile of contentment and mirth. Wherever he comes he brings pleasure with him, and is welcomed with good will;—he gathers enjoyment from all that he sees and hears about him—wars rage, statesmen cabal, revolts arise, earthquakes and pestilence affright the people, but there is a settled tranquillity in the mind of the just man, which these catastrophes are unable to disturb. He lives happy and unmolested, he dies full of years, composed and lamented. Such are the portraits which poets have sketched, from the man of Verona down to the man of Ross. They are of course considerably more faultless than any thing which is actually to be found, but they are of value, inasmuch as the main element out of which they are formed, is the peace of a good conscience, and in so far as they are the expression of a very general opinion, that the mind unaided by outward events, is able to confer unspeakable happiness on its owner. Holy Writ abounds in examples of those who by pursuing a straight and godly course, realized a great measure of this blessedness, and in manifold passages it beautifully depicts the character of him who has the conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. Thus Job says of himself, "when I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street;

the young men saw me, and hid themselves; and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes restrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. The nobles held their peace, and their tongues cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor; and the cause which I knew not I searched out."

David, in the following passage, delineates a nature of the same sort. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

But if the peace of an upright man has been a theme on which the poets have been wont to descant, still more frequently have they made the horrors of a guilty conscience and the anguish of a wounded spirit the matter of their tales. From the common consent with which they have seized upon this topic, one may judge how powerful, how dramatic, how terrible it is. More than one of the master-spirits of the olden tragedy has thought that there was no subject more befitting his art than to depict from scene to scene the throes and agonies of a

conscience-stricken spirit, and has shown us his hero whipped through the world, as it were, by the scourge of the furies. Modern artists have been equally taken with the theme. They have handled it times without number. They have exhibited it in a variety of aspects. Perhaps there has been no writer among them of eminent vigor and fancy but has at the least touched this string, and shown in some thrilling notes the deep intensity of the passion of remorse. What is so often described must be an interesting subject. What is so greedily sought after must have its counterpart in nature. What the ablest minds of all ages have chosen to delineate, must needs be a powerful theme. What they advance in this way is but the reality of life somewhat heightened and embellished. The world we live in teems with examples of the terrible vengeance that is taken by an offended conscience. Men are seen who suffer under it all their life long,—who lose all buoyancy of spirit,—all sense of pleasure,—who drag along as under the weight of an insupportable burden,—who look around them upon this beautiful world with a jaundiced eye that can discern no comeliness in any one of the objects on which it gazes,—whose cheek has lost the hue of health while they are still in their manhood's prime,—whose mind has parted with the taste for happiness at a season when that taste should be the keenest,—who sigh and groan and are in heaviness every hour, and who live on, more from habit and a fear to die, than from any enjoyment which they have in living. Nay, the annals of society furnish us with cases that tell more loudly still of the punishments inflicted by an exasperated conscience. Very often do we hear of those who are so stung and maddened by its barbed arrows, that to them

it positively seems a change for the better to rush uncalled into a dread eternity, all horrible as the prospect must appear. Of others, that, unable to endure the incessant rankling of a terrible secret, they have divulged what no eye but that of the Almighty had looked upon, have become their own accusers, and have thought a death of ignominy and pain less intolerable than the fearful upbraiding of the witness within. With such palpable facts before our eyes, with a judge so powerful and righteous in our breasts, let us not say that this lower world is a medley, a chaos, a theatre of blind chance, a scene without plan or order, wherein virtue goes without its reward and vice without its punishment. Rather, bethinking ourselves who it was that planted in our bosoms this faithful witness, and remembering how severe is its scrutiny, let us say that there is a plan in the events of this earth,—that the providence of the Eternal is manifested in its concerns,—that his eye is visibly fixed upon our doings,—that his finger is evidently put forth to reward and to smite,—that he has appointed this agent to be his vicegerent to punish the deeds of secrecy, and to bring to light the things that were done in darkness. Let us derive from the functions of this his instrument, an argument to prove a plan of temporal retribution, and let us say that in this sense at least there is much meaning in the declaration of Moses,—“Be sure your sin will find you out.”

The truth is, that mankind are far from attaching sufficient weight to this point in their estimate of the condition of one another, and greatly because of this does it happen, that their notions of a special providence are so vague and indefinite. In judging of the happiness of their fellow beings, men are prone to consider only the

*outward and material circumstances of their lot,—their wealth, family, station and persons,—not taking into account the moral peculiarities which are really the grand constituents of happiness or misery.* In spite of the doctrines which have circulated in the world from remotest times, in which wise men, sacred and profane, repeat and asseverate the truth that happiness is in the mind rather than in the condition, it is singular what gross ideas are still prevalent on the subject, and strange to observe what an exaggerated value men persist in ascribing to rank, wealth, and fame. Because they inveterately confine their view to these circumstances, because they will not inspect more thoroughly and search more closely, because they persevere in imagining that felicity is present wherever these things are found, because they are so coarse and so careless as to take small cognisance of the moral portion of a man's condition, because of all this, it occurs, that they do not more nicely observe the workings of a providence, and the features of a plan of temporal retribution.

Here is one who by systematically pursuing through the course of a long and active life, a plan of the grossest and most undeviating selfishness, has at length surrounded himself with all those things which are currently regarded as the constituents of happiness. His mansion is a palace decorated with all that art backed by unbounded wealth can furnish. His domain is of princely extent, variety, and beauty. His influence is large and unquestioned. His health and vigor are unimpaired even by the touch of pain or sickness. His family spring up around him like young olive plants well watered. To the nicest observer he betrays not a symptom of uneasiness or sorrow. What is wanting to him?

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Where are the tokens of retributive justice in his lot? He wants a soul—and all that feeling does to render a condition enviable, is lacking to him. He has extinguished in his heart those emotions of pity and love, of benevolence and sympathy, which are the well-springs of genuine happiness. He has no pleasing retrospect of good deeds on which to look back, in his hours of leisure and meditation. He never relieved the orphan, or protected the widow, or befriended the friendless, or gave bread to the hungry. He never witnessed the look of sincere approbation, never heard the tones of true affection, never received the thanks of gratitude unfeigned. He seems calm and composed. But how much of this may be the result of long habits of sternest self-control. He shows no indications of remorse. But how long may he have done the utmost violence to his feelings, ere he attained this artificial tranquillity? Through how many bitter heart-aches, and terrible struggles may he have passed, before he arrived at his present apathy? How long and obstinately must he have fought against conviction, and outraged his conscience, before he could have rendered it thus mute and powerless? And may not the anguish which he has endured in such seasons, do more than counterbalance all the gross and brute satisfaction that he has known in the whole course of his base career? Moreover he still lives, and there may be in reserve for him pangs which shall show that conscience is not dead, but only sleeping. A death-bed may await him, so full of horrors, that nothing but actual hell could present anything more horrible. Then, when there is no longer any scope for the thoughts and avocations with which he once contrived to engross his soul, when the agonies of a shattered frame are fearfully com-

bined with the pungent stings of awakened conscience, when memory brings up in long array the miserable past, and anticipation conjures up the ghastly future—then, through days and weeks of unmitigated torture, may he proclaim by start and shudder, by awful dreams, by groans and shrieks, that this earth is a theatre of God's justice, and that his sins at length have found him out.

Here is another who has run the career of a *charteris*—by dint of uncommon activity in union with a thorough absence of principle, he has amassed a princely revenue—and has retained the strength and health that might enable him to enjoy it. He has practised rapacity, artifice and fraud, sometimes in their smallest, sometimes in their largest forms. Nothing has been too mean for his avarice—nothing too vast for his intense appetite of gain. He has been by turns the usurer, the gamester, and the swindler. He has pillaged the weak and the strong, the poor and the affluent. He has constantly escaped the arm of justice, although ~~X~~cautiously on the very point of being taken and crushed. And carefully improving his fraudulent gains, and continually managing his health and constitution, he dies full of years and wealth. This is the rarest of all examples—  
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~~X~~properly such a character appears not once in a century—and as such might properly be classed as an exception to the general rule. Yet even in this most uncommon instance, if the man be analyzed with the distinction between *moral* and *material* happiness present to the view, it will be a very doubtful question whether he has any title to be considered an exception. A more careful investigation of his secret history than what men are commonly willing to bestow, will most

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probably show that there was not one element of real happiness in the sum total of his existence. He ran a race with conscience—he practised black arts with his moral feelings. He found that it was hopeless to wish for peace, and in lieu of it he lived in a whirl of perpetual excitement—and he was enabled to persist in this artificial life by means of a frame of peculiar vigor. And whilst to those who carelessly eyed him from the distance, he seemed to die in peace—he probably departed not until he had a thousand times felt that life was a miserable burden—nor until he had wrought himself into the horrid persuasion that there is no scene beyond the present.

### CHAPTER III.

#### TEMPORAL RETRIBUTION INFILCTED BY THE OPINION OF SOCIETY.

Man is eminently a social being, and as such, a large share of the happiness or misery which he is capable of feeling, arises out of the relation in which he stands to the community in which he lives. Surveying mankind in all their aspects, as pagan or christian, ancient or modern, dwelling in the cold, the temperate or the torrid zone, as wise or unlettered, polished or barbarous, rich or poor, we are forced to admit that in all they exhibit themselves imperfect creatures, and consequently in no instance can their verdict be considered an infallible standard of right and wrong. So far indeed is it from a faultless criterion, that the history of human opinion as to the morality of actions, is crowded with things eccen-

tric, wild, dark and abominable. Savage nations, ancient and modern, have regarded war to be so justinable, that it has constituted their chief enjoyment and one of their principal avocations. They have esteemed it to be lawful, nay incumbent to carry on their wars in the most bloody manner, and to perpetrate every species of cruelty on their captive enemies. In every portion of the heathen world, it has been considered right to make merchandise of men, to make slaves of enemies, criminals and debtors, and to treat their slaves in the most harsh and inhuman manner. In large portions of the world, the sins of license in their worst forms have been permitted and sanctioned, nay, have been ascribed to their deities, and have been interwoven with the rites of their idolatrous worship. In many regions, crimes which it is thought shameful even to name, have been practised without disguise, without scandal, without punishment. In several extensive countries, parents were invested with such a right over their children, that it was customary to kill them when want threatened, or anger instigated, the law being silent, and society taking no offence. In Sparta it was thought no crime to steal—the guilt consisted in the theft's being detected. Among the Romans and other nations, suicide was regarded as no crime—on the contrary was often lauded by poets and philosophers, as the brave man's last expedient.

In the christian world, when we take it in all its dimension, it is singular to notice how many vices are practised, tolerated, and countenanced by large numbers in each community. Thus there are several countries within the range, in which the sins of licentiousness are viewed with little or no detestation by the mass of society, and wherein the dark crime of adultery may be

said to have the sanction of general and established custom. Throughout a large portion of Europe, it has long been regarded as a very slight offence to defraud the revenue in many of its branches, and large numbers have practised the imposition without incurring heavy censure from society. Among more than one of the European nations, public opinion attaches but a slight stigma to the crime of self-murder, and there is a numerous class in each of them who are disposed to exalt it to the rank of an act of heroism. In every country of christendom, duelling is viewed with much less horror than its real turpitude would require—and among several of the peoples it is practised commonly, without punishment, censure or opprobrium. In short, a survey of the world brings us to the conclusion, that there is a morality of the east and the west, of the barbarous and the polished, of the heathen and the christian, a morality of classes, of the high and the low, of the lettered and the ignorant—a morality of professions, of the soldier and the priest, of the physician and the lawyer, of the merchant and the artisan, of the mechanic and peasant, of the free-booter and outlaw. Where there has been and is so much variety, so much error, so many evidently wrong and wicked notions, it would be most absurd to hold up the rule as perfect and the criterion as infallible. It is but just however to remark, that the false views of mankind look more appalling, when thus collected together into one group, than when scattered in their natural order along the whole surface of the earth. These are the errors of different times, of many nations and various countries. They cannot be found together in any one region or period. After making a just and liberal allowance for the defects of human opinion, there is

room and verge enough for the position, that men have established ideas of right and wrong, and that to infringe these is to draw down their censure on the offender. So there is this position, that it may be carried out to the extreme ends of the question, and will be found to apply in every direction. Thus even in those smaller communities, composed of men who because of their unsocial crimes have been driven beyond the pale of the general association, even among outcasts and robbers, it will be found that there are conventional rules of right and wrong, and that among them almost as much as elsewhere, these rules exert an influence. In a word, no confederation can be seen that is without its own code of morality—simply because without such a bond it could not possibly hold together.

Now whatever may be thought as to the *abstract rightness* of human opinions, there cannot be any question that they have an inclination to countenance what society considers good, and to discourage what it thinks evil—nor can it be doubted that the approbation which it bestows, and the censures which it inflicts, go far to confer happiness, or to inflict misery.

The love of praise, and the dread of shame are strong principles in our nature—so strong that they do much to keep society together, so influential that they prompt to a large number of those illustrious efforts of talent, heroism, generosity and self-denial which adorn the annals of the human family. Influenced by this powerful emotion, the man of letters does violence to nature through long years, that he may put together some treatise that may attract the admiration of the wise of his day—and if their praise be refused him, he can console himself for their neglect, and continue his efforts

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with the hope that a wiser posterity may succeed which shall bestow on his memory the honors that were denied to him while he lived—prompted by the same strong passion, the soldier rushes into the hot mêlée, where he knows that certain death awaits him, because he hopes that his country will inscribe his name in the list of her bravest warriors. The savage hero exults under the tortures inflicted by his cruel and ingenuous enemies, telling them that the future warriors and the brown maids of his tribe will sing his exploits in the bold melodies of the nation. Strong is our love of indolence—yet what feats of activity, strength, and endurance are continually produced by this our love of praise. Great is our fondness for ease—yet how frequently is it overcome—how often are the most cruel hardships cheerfully undergone, at the instigation of ambition! Much is our love of wealth—yet the apostle leads us to conclude that a stronger influence, the desire of praise, will cause men to “give all their goods to feed the poor.” Striking is the regard which we show for our persons and lives—yet the same apostle intimates, that pride will so far get the better of such feelings, as to induce a man “to give his body to be burned”—and his remark is amply corroborated in the memoirs of mankind. It was justified by the early professors of our faith, multitudes of whom filled with a fanatical love of fame, used to provoke their enemies to inflict the martyrdom which they would willingly have spared them. It is vindicated up to our own days, in the case of the Hindoo widow who mounts the funeral pile of her husband, and dies in the flame which consumes his corpse. An unanswerable proof of the influence of society on the conduct of its members, is the fact that the law of God constantly specifies this as one of the

principal obstacles in the path of the christian. A convincing proof that scripture states the matter justly, is this, that when the law of God and the practice of the world are opposed to each other, multitudes prefer to walk by the human rule, numbers stumble between the two opinions, and they who select the divine rule find it the hardest of all tasks to adhere to it in a steadfast and consistent manner.

When such is the force of human opinion, it seems only reasonable to think that it must be a severe chastisement when it descends on the transgressor, and in this view it appears correct to regard it as one of the instruments whereby Providence asserts his justice, and manifests to the offender that his sin shall surely find him out. Observation proves it to have great power, and shows that it can punish as sharply as it can reward richly. When it sets a stigma upon a man, the effect is as if a curse were pronounced against him, for he seldom seems to prosper afterwards. Some few there are who by the aid of divine grace are enabled to retrieve their fame, and by the unswerving rectitude of their after lives to obliterate the recollection of past mis-deeds. But in the majority of instances it is otherwise. A mark seems affixed which cannot be removed, and a taint is communicated which cannot be wiped away. The man is blighted, branded, and often crushed. If he be of a stern and energetic nature, he probably affects to "brave the world, continues in his evil way, perhaps rushes into worse crimes, and becomes in the full force of the term, "a bold, bad man." If of softer mould he sinks beneath the blow, tamely and passively drags on his heavy and hopeless career, and finds in artificial excitement a relief, which he cannot procure from other sources.

There is so much that is painful, striking, and even terrible in this predicament, that the poets, who are alive to moving scenes, have often made it the theme of their tales. Sensitive as we are, even the worst among us, to praise or blame, it is truly a grievous case to be banished from the sympathies of our fellows and equals—to be met with the stern frown, the cold repulse, the cutting rebuke, the scornful invective, or the frigid civility that endures no nearer approach. It would be quite insupportable, was it not in the power of him who is thus stigmatised, to descend to a lower class in the social scale, and to find there that fellowship and welcome which he has ceased to encounter among the men of his former caste. And then the stigma of society involves with it results more palpable than the loss of good name. It often consigns the man to an unfriended and indigent career. It bars the road to wealth, place and preferment. The chastisement is at once of a moral and a material character. Occasionally we hear of men who affect to be above the reach of this tribunal, and who pretend to despise the sentence with all its results. But on examining closely, it will be found that these are vain pretences. They are inwardly writhing under the chastisement which they affect to disregard. They are following the foolish policy of undervaluing what they cannot regain. They are cajoling themselves with the admiration of the weak and the wicked, who are astonished by their bravadoes. And they are probably suffering more acutely than those who speak less vauntingly of their stoicism and their firmness.

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the whole consonant to the law of God, and regarding it as acting by the permission and with the sanction of providence, let us give it a place in our system, and while we are alive to its imperfections, let us not shut our eyes to what it really performs. But let us say, here is another instrument by which iniquity is chastised, here is another net in which the sinner is taken, here is a fresh testimony to the words of Moses, "Be sure your sin will find you out."

## CHAPTER IV.

### TEMPORAL RETRIBUTION EXERCISED BY MEANS OF HUMAN LAWS.

There is an essential tendency in sin to go on increasing, and to rise to higher degrees, or to branch off into sins of other descriptions. This progress is almost necessary, and the connection among the members of the family of vice is very intimate. Owing to this, when sin is yielded to in any degree, it is nearly impossible to specify the result. It may ascend to the highest measure of crime, or it may engender almost any one of the other vices. This course is so natural and so imperceptible that it is not easy to describe how one sin merges into another. Thus there are examples every day to show that the man who begins by being unfair in small things, frequently ends by putting forth his hand to purloin and plunder, and becomes the swindler, the forger or the daring bandit. By the same progress, and in the same manner, we notice the sabbath-breaker, the drunkard or the libertine, proceeding to deeds of yet

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greater turpitude,—deeds of cruelty, of violence and bloodshed. Such things fall out every day. And thus they who have gone on braving the opinion of society, despising its lighter chastisements, fall at length under its heaviest vengeance. It is well known that it has terrible punishments at its disposal, and it is certain that these descend with much accuracy upon such as have violated its laws. It can impose upon the offender the last degree of odium and ignominy,—it can tear him from his household and friends, and separate for ever the dearest ties that bind men to earth,—it can load his body with fetters, plunge him into a noisome dungeon, make him eat the bitter bread of captivity and exile, or doom him to a death of violence and shame. All this it can do with justice as its guide, and heaven as its sanction.

Scripture, which is a magazine of facts and doctrines adapted for instruction in every possible situation, comes to our assistance here also, and shows us in various examples the progressive tendency of evil principles. Thus, how fair and comely does Saul appear when he is first ushered on the scene; the eye rests on him with pleasure, so ingenuous and uninspiring does he seem. Yet this same man is presented to us in the sequel, advancing step by step to the darkest crimes. He neglects the commands of Jehovah in lighter matters, and the evil spirit gaining upon him, he proceeds to worse offences, cherishes a deadly jealousy against the intrepid youth who had brought honor to his army and kingdom, refuses to be won by his constant assiduity, deference and attention, lifts his javelin to smite him to the wall, pursues him from place to place, and relents not even when David had generously spared him, when he might easily have taken his life:—and though strictly enjoined

to slay all sorcerers and witches, so far forgets his duty, as to employ a witch to disclose to him the intentions of God. Here is the progressiveness of crime. Here is one who, commencing with all the semblance of good about him, advances onward to the bad eminence of a hardened and heaven-defying offender. Something of the like sort may be seen in the case of Absalom. He seems to have possessed the qualities of generosity and courage, and in virtue of these to have been dear both to his father and the people. But he listened to the voice of ambition and the advice of evil counsellors, and raised himself up against the man after God's own heart, against an old good man, against the father who tenderly loved him, against the king, the anointed of the Lord. Here again is sin exhibited in its tendency to increase. Hazaël is presented at two different points of his history. At the one he bears on him the appearance of integrity, and when forewarned by the prophet of the crime which he would afterwards perpetrate, so great is his apparent astonishment and horror that he exclaims, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?" At the other point he is beheld committing the black deed, which before excited in him such loathing and surprise. Ahab began his reign with wicked dispositions, but as he advanced his sinfulness became more bold and glaring,—he espoused the daughter of an idolatrous king, worshipped her god Baal, erected groves and altars in honor of him, followed the counsels of his wicked consort, slew the righteous Naboth, neglected his people in the season of famine, and killed the prophets of the Lord. The case of Judas cannot be too frequently adduced or analyzed. He must have worn at least the exterior of decency if not of goodness, to have been

selected by our Lord, to have been suffered by him and the disciples to company with them, to enjoy their intimacy and friendship. In the whole of the history there is but one intimation that there was any thing especially faulty in his deportment,—where it is said “that he was a thief and had the bag.” By which we are probably to understand that he was of a covetous and greedy nature, and that influenced by these feelings, he was addicted to purloin from the deposit committed to his charge. This is bad, yet what a progress in sin must there have been from this point, up to that other when he is seen to sell innocent blood,—when he is beheld betraying his gracious and divine master to the death,—doing so for thirty pieces of silver,—doing so in the presence of the people and his brother disciples,—doing so though clearly forewarned by the lips of Jesus himself. Were this the only example which could be alleged, there would be enough to prove the fatal tendency that there is in sin to go on increasing, and matter of warning and alarm to transgressors, lest being borne along by the current they should be plunged into a like abyss. A man cherishes an avaricious spirit, and terminates in the blackest crime by far which is to be found in the annals of the whole world, barters the best, the wisest, the most indulgent of masters for a price, makes merchandise of blood, gives perfect goodness to be crucified, sells God to men, consigns innocence over to devils! The ancients were struck by this fact of the progressiveness of sinful inclinations—their sages and philosophers moralized on it—their poets illustrated and embodied it in the life and action of their personages. They seem to have formed so strong an idea of the power of the tendency, that in order to explain it they stripped men of their volition,

divested them of the liberty of choice, supposed them to be passive agents under the control of an iron destiny, foredoomed to the crimes which they perpetrated, swept by an irresistible fatality along the dismal career of guilt and remorse. Somewhat in this attitude are Oedipus, Medea and other characters exhibited to the view, and a singular interest of its own sort is imparted to their dark story, as they appear thus mechanically driven onward by a power foreign to themselves, and endued with a force against which it is in vain to struggle.

It is hardly requisite to say that the opinion of a fatality is opposed to all sane notions and all right practice in morality and religion. We mention it with a desire to show, that men accounted sagacious in their generation, considered themselves obliged to admit the existence of such a mechanism, in order to elucidate and explain the noted tendency of crime to grow and strengthen. The phenomenon must be remarkable which seemed to need the supposition of a cause so powerful. In more recent times, and in countries in which the Gospel shone with sufficient clearness to dispel superstition, and to render those inexcusable who hold dark and irreligious opinions, it has been usual enough to regard the course of crime as a sort of fatal necessity. There have been moralists who have commented on the idea, and poets who have clothed it with a living shape, and embellished it with the decorations, of fancy. Thus, to select one out of many instances Macbeth enters on the scene with that frank and open temper which men consider the most opposed to cruelty, treachery and artifice. He makes one step on the road to guilt, and from that point onward to the dark catastrophe, he progresses in crime and looks as if he were

posed them to iron destiny, rated, swept career of guilt re Oedipus, e view, and ed to their driven on- adued with of a fatal- t practice a desire genera- he exist- late and now and arable cause so ries in to dis- e who usual fatal com- with ons, ces pen- ty, and s- e

thrust forward by a foreign influence which he cannot resist. He tampers with the "paltering fiends" who, ministering to the passion of ambition which is strong in his character, sow the seeds which, cherished by the evil of his nature, and fostered by his wicked consort, produce in the end a rank crop of most odious crimes. Generous, frank and manly as he once was, this is he who sheds the blood of his aged, kind and confiding sovereign, violating not only the law of hospitality, but fearfully abusing trust, and breaking one of the most solemn bonds by which man is united to man. This is he who sends the hired assassins against his associate and friend. This is he who with wanton and gratuitous cruelty, slays the little ones when the father has escaped his grasp. This is he who steeps the kingdom in the blood of its best subjects. And this is he who after fighting in his fortalice with the savage ferocity of a wild beast tracked to its den, turns coward at the last, and flies from him whom he had so irretrievably wronged. This the perfused one, the traitor, the murderer, the assassin and the coward, is that same man who a little before stood forward so true, so loyal, so generous, so bold.

In this history so true to nature, or rather in those scenes borrowed from real life, the tendency of guilt to continue and increase is exemplified in a most vivid manner, and that influence which heathens term fatality, and Christians sin and Satan, is beheld hurrying its subject onward in a career wherein he seems to lose the ability of choice, and the characteristics of a rational and responsible being.

In actual life, and in the domain of prose, it is matter of common occurrence to meet those who have been

swept onward from fault to fault, from sin to sin, from crime to crime, with a progress as easy, as dark, and almost as rapid as ever poet delineated in a moving melo-drama of five eventful acts. When the confessions of such an one are heard or perused, it is singular to notice the starting point which he assigns as the beginning of his progress, interesting to observe how small it is compared with his after mis-deeds, thrilling to remark what throes and struggles he had to undergo ere he could venture on this first step on the road to ruin. At this point were the difficulties to be overcome and the convictions to be fought against. But he cannot so well show the landmarks along the remainder of his route, for as he went along he found the road smoother and plainer,—he had no such resistance to surmount as he advanced, and the traces on his memory are not so vivid. The interval between his first declension and the deed which has filled up the measure of his crimes is apt to seem to him like a fitful dream of which he remembers but fragments,—he is prone to represent it as a dismal trance, in which he was the victim of influences that dragged him forward as it were in spite of himself, and when they had flung him over the precipice, the vision disappeared, the trance broke, he awoke and found himself a malefactor.

Owing to this tendency in sin to go on increasing, it happens that they who are not put back by the first check, the upbraiding of conscience, nor deterred by the second check, the voice of society, fall under the weight of worse chastisement, and render themselves amenable to those laws which each community has constructed for its own protection.

The connection between the Almighty and the penal

code of the Old Testament was immediate and direct, inasmuch as each article and clause was his own express institution. When it therefore put forth its hand upon the offender, it was exactly as if Jehovah bared his own arm to punish the transgressors of his law. So long as it was carried forth, it was literally a piece of divine mechanism whose movements were under the control of the divine author, and whose workings were the visible manifestations of the supreme mind. Jehovah was the centre of the machine, and each several wheel, spring or pulley, by its movements, indicated the feelings and sentiments of their heavenly Framer. The same thing cannot be alleged of any other code of laws. The errors which we have already noticed as attaching to the moral notions of every people, have been infused into their enactments, which are of course the expression of their opinions and character. The utmost which can correctly be affirmed of any one code, is, that it is in the main based upon the divine law, and that in the greater number of its enactments, it proceeds on the authority of revelation. The best systems that exist have obvious defects intermingled with them, and violate either the letter or the spirit of the Gospel, in several of their articles. Taking revelation as our rule, some of their punishments appear to err by an excess of severity,—others by an excess of leniency, whilst some crimes very hateful in God's sight, and very pernicious to society, have no statute pointed at them, and escape unpunished. Thus, to confine our views to the criminal enactments of our own country, it has long been subject of complaint, that in many instances they are not balanced in the proportion of the offence, that some crimes are too harshly dealt with, that others are treated with improper leniency.

cy, and that several to which the law might properly and beneficially extend, are left without its pale. The debtor, it is alleged, has been treated with a degree of severity disproportioned to his offence. The punishment of death has been inflicted indiscriminately on a variety of crimes which differ much in the extent of their turpitude. It has been imposed not only on the murderer, but in many instances has been adjudged in cases of assault, forgery, highway robbery and even petty thefts. The crime of duelling, on the other hand, has been treated with undue gentleness, being permitted in some instances to go without any punishment, and in others receiving a sentence much below its desert. The heavy sins of adultery and seduction, by which the peace and comfort of families are entirely overturned, are commonly suffered to escape, and when brought under the cognisance of the law, it is in such a shape as enables it to reach only the purse of the offender. Divorce is permitted on pleas different from that which is enjoined in the divine law, and in this case the distinct enactment of Scripture is violated. In these, and in several other instances which we forbear to adduce, our laws seem to offend against the letter or the spirit of divine revelation, or both at once. Where there is this discrepancy between things human and divine, it is not accurate to identify Jehovah with the human institution throughout the whole of its extent. Where there is this difference, he cannot be so implicated in its operations, as that we may say, lo this is he, here is his arm bared, here is his hand put forth to smite. Still, even the most imperfect of penal codes, being in the main levelled against vice, may be considered to be, on the whole, agreeable to the divine will, whilst the more perfect among them, allowance

being made for their errors and omissions, may be said to reflect with considerable accuracy the mind of the Most High, and to carry out with tolerable justice the ordinances of his appointment. Hence it is that when we take a broad and general survey of society, when we include within the range of our observations, not a limited but a large number of individuals, not a point of time, but a considerable lapse of years, it will be to us matter of astonishment to notice with what accuracy laws have done their duty, what a large proportion of the sins of the time has fallen beneath their cognisance, how very many of the offenders of the period have suffered under their lash, suffered much as any close observer of the ways of Providence would have anticipated and justified, and how very few of the evil doers have escaped wholly unchastised.

The survey of most countries, and more especially of Christian lands, will amply corroborate this assertion. The mind will return from the inspection satisfied of this,—that if punishment descends not on the malefactor with that nice accuracy which exists in *the laws of the universe of matter*, there is at least enough of precision to cause men to tremble at the thought of transgressing, enough of method to enable them to see that there is a premium upon integrity and a tax upon vice.

Descending to the details of the subject—the slothful man is seen to neglect his affairs from year to year, slighting the many warnings which caution him to pursue a different course—after a while the just and natural results of his folly and guilt come down upon him—the law lays hold upon him, incarcerates him in a gaol, where perhaps through the whole course of his future life he is compelled in solitude, in penury, among wick-

ed associates, and in scenes of wretchedness, to bewail the offences of his former career. The careless and extravagant man purchases where he cannot pay, promises what he cannot perform, lives upon the industrious and frugal, affects to be generous when he is not just, and endeavors to cope with those whom providence has placed many degrees above him in the social scale—he too, even if he be not tempted to swindle and purloin, is taken in his wickedness, is disgraced in the eyes of those before whom it was his ambition to shine, and is taught as the inmate of a prison, to see the guilt and the punishment of prodigality and pride. The calumniator who stabs in the dark, who regards the character of his neighbour as fair game for him to hunt down, who gratifies a spirit of malice, revenge, or falsehood at the expense of that which is dearest to the good and upright—he at some period of his career, is commonly taken in the meshes of the law, and sharply visited for his dark offences. The drunkard who heeds not the indigence of his household, the loss of his good name, the ruin of his body, or the prospect of eternal punishment, is often aroused from his lethargy by the rude hand of human law when it seizes on him for debts unpaid, or for deeds of disorder, violence, and bloodshed. The unjust man who commences his course by small cozening and petty filching, usually finds as he advances to acts more glaring, that the law has an eye to detect and an arm to punish. The lewd person who lives for the gratification of his sensual appetites, and who finds no obstacle in his path, whilst he restricts himself to this evil course, very generally is betrayed by this sin into other offences, which bring him within the reach of sharp laws and severe chastisements. The profane

man who makes the precepts and commandments of the scriptures a matter of bitter sarcasm, or scurrilous jesting, although he is allowed to pass unpunished whilst he limits himself to this, frequently steps from the infringement of God's word to the violation of men's laws, and then is made to feel that the wicked shall not always go without retribution even on this side the grave. The thief and the robber however adroitly they practise their mischievous calling, whether alone or in bands, by sea or by land, in great towns, or among deep forests and high mountains, find with rare exceptions that the career of crime is short and dangerous, and that subtle as they are, the society whom they invade cannot always be outraged with impunity. How many such are speedily caught—how very few are there who escape long—how seldom does it happen that we hear even of one who evades the law through life—and still more seldom is it that one finds space for repentance, alters his ways and becomes an honest man. How many such are there who die a death of ignominy or of torture. How many thousand are there who linger out long years in subterranean pits, in cells and dungeons, in chains and shackles, in hulks and galleys, in sinks of vice, misery and hardship at home, in sinks of corruption and wretchedness in foreign lands, under burning suns and pelting hurricanes, tasked beyond their strength, goaded forward by the lash, hopeless and desperate both for the present and the future. What volumes might be written on this aspect of human society! What romances of real life might be saturated with incident from the events of these dens of iniquity! What chronicles might be compiled from the transactions of the dungeons and prisons of any one of the nations of Europe!

What moral treatises might be derived from the records of these magazines of immorality! Here there would be no call for efforts of fancy, no need of exaggeration or embellishment. To narrate things as they fell out, would more than suffice to make the tear start, the breast heave, and the hair stand on end. And were such volumes put together with any view to illustrate the workings of providence, how vividly would they exemplify the position which we are now maintaining, and how loudly would they echo back our text, "Be sure your sin will find you out."

And not to omit the case of the murderer—from the time when the Almighty expressed his detestation of the first bloody deed, and put a stamp upon the first homicide, his anger has descended in unbroken succession upon those who sin after the similitude of Cain, and if we are in any degree to gather his feelings from those of mankind, the crime has ever seemed to him deserving of the worst doom that society can inflict. A list of the punishments that have been adjudged in different countries and nations against this awful sin, would comprise particulars many of which are too horrible to be mentioned. Even in christian regions wherein the doctrine is recognised that punishments must be stern but not wantonly cruel, how appalling is the sentence commonly pronounced upon him who sheddeth the blood of man. He is condemned to death with all the imposing solemnities of justice. The hour of his doom is read forth. He is immured in a den—he is penned in a cage black with the memories of the successive murderers who have been its tenants. His body is cramped with irons. He is visited like a wild beast by his keepers. He is fed with bread and water—and after the few days allotted to

him are expired, even whilst the clock is striking the hour of doom, he is led forth upon a platform to be gazed upon by eager thousands, and amidst their yells and mockings and loud execrations he is seen to writhe and quiver suspended between earth and heaven. Even his body is not permitted to be dealt with like those of other men. It is given over to be cut and mangled, and torn piecemeal. Even his bones are not suffered to be laid in the grave—they are preserved in the museums of science, and future generations point to them and say, there hangs the skeleton of a murderer.

And then the train of events by which this crime is so often brought to light. To look out upon the world, it would seem no hard matter for those who are wicked enough to perpetrate the deed, to escape from detection. To peruse the narratives of crime, it would appear, on the contrary, as if it were almost impossible. When the criminal does not become desperate and turn his own accuser,—when he does not disclose his guilt in the agony and panic of dismal dreams, how often does some circumstance quite as singular throw light upon the mystery, and lead to an inquiry which ends in bringing the offence home to its author. How frequently has this happened after many years have run by, after men have nearly lost all recollection of the event,—after its perpetrator even has forgotten to tremble and ceased to fear! In a word, how often, how strangely, how palpably does the Most High seem to interpose to cast light upon those deeds of darkness,—so that even those who cannot be suspected of religious opinions, are fain to look upon the matter with superstitious awe, and to frame their thoughts into by-words and proverbs, that “blood has a voice,”—that “murder will out.”

Let us admit these considerations also into the system. Let us regard human tribunals as existing by the permission of the Judge Eternal, and as organised, in a measure at least, according to the rule of his word. Let us bear in mind how natural it is for sin to go on increasing up to the point when it brings the offender within the pale of human jurisdiction. Let us remember how generally and with what weight punishment then comes down upon him. And with these thoughts present to our mind, let us again say that there is a nicer order in the affairs of this world than we are disposed to imagine. Let us again repeat that the providence of the Almighty is more evidently manifested than we are prone to conclude after a cursory survey. Let us allow that here is another and a strong testimony to the declaration of Moses, "Be sure your sin will find you out."

## CHAPTER V.

### TEMPORAL RETRIBUTION EXERCISED BY THE SELF-CHASTISING TENDENCY OF SIN.

It is of every consequence to show the traces of a temporal providence, and to prove that the method which God pursues at present is akin to the course which he is to follow at the time of his final judgment. In a philosophical point of view it is agreeable to notice an obvious consistency and unity in the system of the Most High. Nay, there is something revolting to reason to imagine that in so important a department as the moral government of the world, there should be two opposite

systems, one intended for time and the other for eternity. It is much more consonant to what we know of the character of God to conceive that one plan with certain modifications should answer for the two worlds. It is almost essential to what Jehovah has revealed to us of his own nature, to suppose a *similarity* at least between his arrangements for the moral welfare of this life, and that which is to come—with such precise descriptions of himself as he has afforded us, tending to show that he is subject to no variation or change, but is the same yesterday, to-day and forever, it seems to be doing violence to his own declarations, to conceive that he has one plan for the present government of his creatures, and another for the future. Is not this he who names himself I Am, and who assures us that to him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day? In a *religious* view it is even more important to collect and scan the symptoms of a system of present retribution. It is an argument the more in favor of a holy life, and inasmuch as men are more strongly influenced by things adjacent than by things remote, it is one of the most emphatic considerations by which they can be addressed. It says to the transgressor, "Believe what you hear of the terrible chastisements that are reserved for sin, when you behold such plain harbingers in the present method of God's doings,—tremble for the great day of his reckoning, since he shows himself so dreadful even now when his anger is kindled but a little." It says to the righteous man, "Rely all the more in the promises and rewards that are laid up in store for you, when such sweet and abundant foretastes are afforded you in confirmation of the Scripture that godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life which now is, and also of

that which is to come." The course of vice would be smoother than it is, were it not that the sinner is led to anticipate that the future judgments which the Scriptures denounce may be justified by the appearances of things as they are. The walk of faith would be yet more arduous than it is, were it not that the believer can in some degree fortify faith by sight, discern the future through the present, and confirm the Scriptures by the testimony of observation and experience.

There is enough of proof, would men fairly canvass and consider it, to demonstrate that the moral regulation of God cannot be infringed with impunity, and that Jehovah in the present life sits on his tribunal judging the actions of his creatures. Let each one of the vices be considered in its turn, and the truth of this remark will be seen with sufficient clearness. Pride and vanity tempt men to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, and to look down upon those from whose sympathy they might derive pleasure and advantage. They induce them to cope with those who belong to a higher sphere. They subject their possessors to continual mortification when their extravagant pretensions draw down upon them contempt, ridicule and penury. In every community a very considerable portion of the misery that prevails, may be readily traced to the influence of these passions. Of the discontented and indigent who inhabit it, there is no small number who are so because they have wickedly indulged vanity, emulation and pride. Ambition, which is the form that pride assumes in passionate and intellectual natures, is the parent of much of the evil and much of the wretchedness that are to be found amongst men. From the time when it hurled the wicked archangel from heaven

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down to hell, it has been the source of a vast number of the crimes and enormities that have darkened the annals of the moral world. In every country of the world, in every epoch of its history, it would be possible to select at least one personage whose career exemplified all that was bad and brilliant in the workings of ambition. And what heavy chastisement commonly alights upon the man under the influence of this passion. He mounts to a throne by rapid steps, he is cast down from his elevation, begs his bread from door to door, pines away the remainder of his life in a dungeon, or is cut off in the prime of his days by a violent death. Or he attains all the desire of his heart, and finds that he has been in pursuit of a shadow, and weeps like Alexander that there are not left him more worlds to conquer. Or he frets and fevers his mind in his passionate course, until it yields at last to the intolerable pressure, and he who perhaps knew no higher glory than an intellectual supremacy over his fellow-men, stands before them in that condition of idiocy which sinks him below all who have even a gleam of the power of reason. Sharp are the visitations which this passion inflicts, and accordingly the poets, who are quick to discover the most characteristic events of human life, have been accustomed to allot to it a distinguished place, and have considered that there was no topic fitter for their descriptions than the rise and fall, the inner throes and outward struggles of the ambitious man. Probably there are few things in poetry that are drawn with greater power, or that excite a more thrilling interest than such delineations. A sufficient proof that the passion must punish severely, when even the fancied representation has such power to excite emotion. Envy and jealousy are feelings that belong to minds of a

smaller dimensions. Their influence to render life bitter has passed into a proverb. They are said to sour the disposition, and emaciate the frame. Envy is continually described as having a jaundiced eye. The snakes that wreath round the head of the furies are, amongst other things, symbols of the unhappiness that possesses the mind of those afflicted by this passion. The envious man is sure to incur the dislike of the community, and thereby to lose the good estimation and the solid benefits which society confers on those who deserve well of her. Some of the worst acts which men perpetrate are done at the instigation of this passion, and some of the most unhappy beings on whom the sun shines, owe their misery to nothing else but the indulgence of this corroding feeling. Sloth is another failing which brings its chastisement along with it. It debars men from those numerous pleasures that arise out of the active exertion of the mental and bodily faculties. It tends, in the end, to disorder the powers both of mind and body. It is the parent of one half the disease that stalks through the world. It is the cause of a large share of the misanthropy and melancholy that in so many instances render life a burden. It is the frequent source of indigence with all the train of discomfort and sorrows which it involves. Carelessness and prodigality are the origin of a very considerable portion of the misery that prevails in the world. They bring want and dependence into households, they introduce unhappiness and disunion into families, they occasion continual anxiety to all who are brought into collision with them, they expose the man to penury, contempt, disgrace, imprisonment, and they frequently prompt him to worse crimes, inciting him to injustice, rapine and violence. The history of crime authorizes the assertion that prodigality in very

many instances leads to those offences which bring men to the gaol and the gibbet. The sin of lewdness is productive of manifold evil results. It notoriously shortens life, squanders substance, carries an excess of wretchedness into families, produces some of the most cruel distempers with which humanity is visited, and extinguishes those gratifications which flow out of the innocent intercourse of the sexes. What agonies of mind, what sufferings of body, what misery to parents, what wretchedness to husbands, what degradation to women, what division of households, what misery of every description, does not this vice produce wherever it appears. Gluttony wears out the body prematurely, is the frequent occasion of sudden death, weakens the powers of the mind, and is the parent of several of the worst diseases. Intemperance is generally regarded as the vice which of all others is the most fruitful of evil consequences. It saps the vigor of the frame, disturbs the harmony of the nervous system, paralyzes the powers of the mind, disorders the temper, interferes with all the duties of life, dissipates fortune, occasions disease, madness, sudden death, produces every degree of wretchedness in families, and entails sorrow, shame and degradation. The victim of this awful vice is generally poor, unhealthy, unhappy and short-lived. He is commonly a bad citizen, an undutiful son, an unkind husband and a careless father. He often ends by becoming an idiot, a suicide, a murderer or a thief. Dishonesty, in the greater number of instances, draws down its own punishment. It prompts a man to aim at more than fairly belongs to him, and occasions that he earns less than he might do by thorough honesty. After having escaped detection in a few instances, he is at last caught in the

deed, suspicion ever afterwards attaches to his name, he becomes an object of dislike, the path to success and honor is closed against him, a blight falls upon his reputation, and his life, if he is not pushed into worse crimes, is one of poor success and evil estimation. The vice of lying greatly hinders the chances of success, brings hatred and contempt upon a man, and so affects his reputation, that he is not believed or trusted even when he may happen to adhere to the truth. Liars as a class are unhappy, poor and despised. Backbiting, detraction and slander do not any more than the former vices escape without punishment. They bring down certain odium on those who practice them—and they go far to hinder men from being happy, wealthy, or respected. Anger renders its subject a person to be feared and avoided. It wears away the system, prevents all real enjoyment, hinders the formation of true and lasting attachment, greatly stands in the way of success in life, and very often leads to violent and bloody deeds. Avarice makes a man an object of much dislike and scorn in the community, shuts him out from sympathy and affection, locks up his feelings against the emotions of love, pity, and generosity, the experiencing of which constitutes so large a portion of the finest part of human happiness, renders his mind the prey of continual and intense anxiety. The testimony of society affirms that the covetous man is one of the most unhappy of beings, that his mind is racked by the most tormenting solicitude, and that he is excluded from all that the sympathies of his fellow beings can do to heighten his joys and relieve his sorrows. Ignorance in many instances may be reckoned one of the vices, being frequently the result of wilful carelessness and neglect. It too is the

parent of much unhappiness. It condemns the man to an animal existence, excludes him from the pleasures and the benefits that arise out of an exertion of the intellectual powers, forces him to go through with a career of heavy monotonous drudgery, estranges him from all that is large, high, and elevating, peoples his mind with prejudices and follies, with dark superstition or savage bigotry. Neglect of children is continually punished, by the parent being forced to witness their misfortunes and crimes, and being compelled to trace in their career the lamentable results of his foolish indulgence, and more foolish carelessness. Disobedience to parents never escapes without its chastisement—more than half the errors and crimes of mankind, with the distress which they entail, may be traced up to this cause—and nothing is more common than to notice remarkable offenders in their confessions and memoirs, ascribing all the wickedness and sufferings of their history, to the circumstance that they turned a deaf ear to the counsels, warnings and reproofs of their parents.

In short, without enumerating the whole of the vices, we have a sufficient body of evidence to prove the point, that each member of the family has a sting attached to it—and that it is not possible in any one instance to transgress the moral law of God without being chastised by an *appropriate* punishment. So true is this, that there is a disposition even on the part of worldly men to observe the marks and vestiges of such a plan. It is a matter of common occurrence to perceive those who have not philosophy enough to reason upon the general method of God's providence, or faith sufficient to make use of revelation to aid their vision, yet so struck by what seem to them the *occasional* tokens of a system as

to be influenced in some degree by what they notice. Selfish worldlings and practical unbelievers may be found, who, ignorant and heedless of the nature of God or the peculiarities of a future life, are yet so moved by the symptoms in this world of a plan whereby virtue is rewarded and vice chastised, that they give demonstration of their faith by imitating that line of conduct which they have noticed to be attended by agreeable results, and by assuming from temporal motives, that course of practice which they see the good and holy pursuing from heavenly principles. The confessions wrung from the devils, whom Jesus cast forth, in favour of his power and Godhead, are among the strongest of the testimonies in behalf of his divinity. The acknowledgements of these foes to all true religion and morality, in behalf of the system for which we contend, ought to have the like force and weight, being confessions extorted from those who would not willingly by word or deed lend any help to the cause of holiness. Nay, the case might be stated yet more broadly. There is a very considerable portion of human society of which it may be said that their practice is better than their principles. They exhibit in their deportment a degree of propriety and decency, of politeness and forbearance, of suavity and gentleness, of generosity and justice, of temperance and sobriety, which at first sight seem so goodly that we are disposed to assign them to a religious source, and to name them the fruits of genuine evangelical principle. On closer inspection it is found that a large share of these qualities is of earthly origin, is assumed at the instigation of worldly policy, is really put on because men have glimpses and surmises of this system—because they see enough to convince them that honesty is the best *policy*—because they are so per-

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suaded that godliness is *profitable*, as to follow out the notion that even the semblance of virtue may come in for a part of the profit. This testimony is of great value. It implies this much, that a large fraction of mankind, who would by no means give a willing evidence in favour of any matter bearing upon the interests of religion, but would much rather place their influence in the very opposite direction, are yet so struck by the circumstance that the chances in this life are on the side of virtue, that with all their natural antipathy to virtue they labour most assiduously to put it on, and often succeed so well in their endeavor, as to baffle the acute discerning to say whether it be real or counterfeit, the righteousness of the heart or the righteousness of the countenance. When Satan quotes scripture, it is a plain confession that the word of God is an efficient weapon. When worldlings see the plan of the present life to be so decidedly in favour of virtue, that they consent to assume a mask, and to wear it at all hours through a long life, this is a very strong argument in behalf of our system—and this is a very loud testimony to the fact that God shows his finger in the doings of this life, when the most dim-sighted and sceptical are constrained to acknowledge that they see it. Thus it appears that there is a very general suspicion amongst men that something approaching to a plan of present retribution prevails in the world. They exhibit this idea both in their sayings and their actions. What prevents them from allowing the system to be regular and complete, is, that many have not faith enough to believe in an all-wise and powerful God—that many more are too gross to moralise, too busy to analyse, too stupid to speculate, too limited to be able to comprehend the whole of a large

plan. The sceptic does not love to admit the system in its full extent, because that would be to allow more wisdom and justice to Providence than he is willing to assign. The man of business excuses himself by saying that he has not leisure to investigate the whole dimensions of a system, of which he confesses that he sees some portions. The sensualist and voluptuary want inclination to examine matters intellectual, want morality to explain things pure and holy, and accordingly they perceive no more of this system than they can possibly avoid seeing. The man of mean understanding or narrow education, discerns but portions of the scheme, because he has not solidity enough to weigh the matter, depth to explore it, or wisdom to classify and generalise. But the most unbelieving, the most worldly, the most licentious, the most careless, the most stupid and the most ignorant, all discern some segments or traces of the plan, although none of them perceive its whole compass and details. What hinders many others from forming a more accurate opinion on the matter, is the want of the power of analysis, owing to which they mix up subjects that have no bond of connection. Thus many fail to notice the accuracy wherewith sin is punished, not because they are unwilling to look, but because they have a confused view of the methods of providence, because they think of God as one who is as hasty and undistinguishing as themselves, because they expect all sins to be punished on the instant and with the same chastisements, and because they cannot understand the operations of a system that is calm, nice, and appropriate in its decrees. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are full set in them to do evil." Men who are disposed to admit the workings

*X to Carr. MSS.*

of an over-ruling providence will form such gross conceptions of the mode in which they consider it ought to act, that when they perceive it to follow a different course, they become offended, and exclaim that there is no plan, or that the plan which obtains wants regularity or justice. They are displeased because each different sin is not punished with that very chastisement which they regard as the most suitable and the most severe. Thus we are prone to be astonished when we see a selfish and rapacious man permitted to go on increasing in wealth—not showing patience for the judgments of that God who has declared himself to be long-suffering and slow to wrath, and not remembering that there are other methods whereby he may be chastised than by stripping him of his wealth. We are displeased because an ungodly man is allowed to attain to a green and healthy old age; not considering that this may be only affording more scope to the punishments under which he may be suffering—not thinking that he may be said to deserve his health and old age, inasmuch as it is the result of an observance of the rules of sobriety, industry, and prudence, which as much as any other are laws established and regulated by the Most High. We are offended to perceive the man of an irregular and dissolute life exerting a mighty influence over public opinion, and attracting the admiration of mankind. Whereas the qualities which we blame in him are drawing down their proper punishment, undermining his vigor, dissipating his substance, preparing him for disease, indigence and short life. He is admired not because of these vices, but because of brilliant powers which make men forget his faults. Their admiration would be even stronger were he free from these defects. We are prone to mur-

mur when we observe a pretender to superior sanctity, attracting more veneration than the honest man who employs no arts to gain applause. Here too we are unjust. He is admired not because he is an impostor, but because men believe him to be what he appears. The disguise must be a burden and a punishment all the time he wears it. And he will soon be sharply chastised when like other hypocrites he is detected and disgraced. In a word, men are apt to miss seeing this system, because they are disposed to expect that God's ways should be as their ways, because they imagine that sin is not punished unless it receive its doom at the very time, and in the very manner which they would prescribe. Because the method of Providence instead of being hasty, intemperate and undiscerning, is calm, orderly, and appropriate, men are prone to think that he acts not at all, or acts not according to a just rule and measure. A love of mystery and a distaste for close and continual inquiry also occasions that men form loose and erroneous opinions as to this subject. It is pleasing to fancy to imagine a region of doubt, and twilight, and darkness—it is agreeable to a certain sickly species of piety, to make matter of faith what might be made matter of inspection, and to speak of the mysterious dealings of the Almighty rather than subject the mystery to observation, and reason—and hence much specious folly is uttered on this topic, even by those who might be supposed capable of more discernment. Minuter analysis applied to this subject would persuade us, that in most cases there is less of mystery, less of misfortune, and more of iniquity than the short-sighted and careless are disposed to think. Let any well-peopled locality be singled out, the amount of wretchedness that

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is to be found within its compass is great, sometimes appalling. Within its circuit is to be found the prison, the lazar-house, the penitentiary, the bedlam. Thickly sown through its range are to be seen dwellings, wherein there rages each form of disease, each aspect and degree of penury, each shade and variety of wretchedness. How much of this indigence with all the train of cruel sorrows that accompany it, may be traced without any difficulty to improvidence and sloth! How much of this disease that racks the body and paralyzes the mind, is bred or fomented by intemperance of feeling or conduct. Walk through the cells of the mad-house, where every form of mental alienation is classified, where the drivelling idiot, the maundering lunatic, and the raging maniac are to be witnessed in their turn. Examine the history of each. In some instances it is the child suffering for the sin or the infirmity of the parent. And this, if sin it be, is but sin in the distance. But in many more instances, it is the man reaping the fruits of what he himself has sowed, writhing under the fearful malady which he has brought on himself by long indulgence of morbid feeling, or long habits of licentious practice. Traverse in like manner the wards of the crowded hospital, in which are assorted the manifold aspects of bodily derangement. In some instances you will be obliged to refer the matter to calamity or accident. But in no small number if you accurately inquire out the cause, you will find that some one of the vices was the real parent. Enter within the privacy of the dwellings of individuals, note the many shapes of misery and distemper that lurk within them, examine into the origin of the evils which you witness. Here also you will discover that sin has been at work, and

here too you will be forced to admit, that if there is much calamity, it is because there has been much transgression.

We make no pretence to have exhausted a topic so wide and various; at the utmost, we aspire only to have marked out its outlines, and to have shown the territory which it includes. Our argument we think authorises us to assert this much, that when any considerable portion of society is scanned with proper sobriety and patience—or when the career of any one individual is drawn out and examined with due attention, and with fair allowances and restrictions, it will be seen that each particular vice inflicts its own chastisement—it will be perceived that the complexion and character of the events of the present world are no stigma upon the wisdom, beneficence, and justice of the Almighty—it will be found that the mechanism of a system of retribution is to be met with on the earth, sufficiently well organized and developed, to entitle us to take up the words of Moses, and say to the transgressor, "Be sure your sin will find you out."

## CHAPTER VI.

### A SYSTEM OF TEMPORAL RETRIBUTION RENDERED PROBABLE BY THE REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS OF A FUTURE STATE.

The gospel has brought life and immortality to light, and it imparts very exact accounts of the character of the future world. In its pages there is explicit mention of a tribunal wherein judgment shall be executed with such

accuracy, that strict reckoning shall be taken of every thought, word and deed. We have distinct information as to the character and qualifications of the judge who is to direct the proceedings—he is the omniscient God, the searcher of hearts, unto whom all things are known, from whom nothing is hidden, who hateth iniquity with a perfect hatred, and in whose sight sin is the abominable thing which he cannot away with. We are informed in the word of him who cannot lie, that this court is to be held in the end of the world, that all the generations of men are to be assembled together, that God shall dispense judgment, and that the angels of heaven shall be the witnesses. We are instructed as to the nature of the sentence which shall be pronounced against the guilty—a portion shall be assigned them in a lake of fire and brimstone, the worm that dieth not shall gnaw them, the fire that is never quenched shall consume them, they shall have for associates, devils, and the spirits of all the damned, and this shall endure throughout all eternity. There are many who admit all this in regard to the future world, who yet are blind to the symptoms of retributive justice in the present life,—nay, there are many well meaning men, who make the very fact of future rewards and punishments, a key to the supposed mystery, and an explanation of the alleged absence of all retribution in the present world. Hence they frequently draw broad and vivid contrasts between the two dispensations, compare the rigorous justice of the future scene, with the apparent want of plan that characterizes this life. They suppose Jehovah now to be exercising his patience merely, to be slumbering for a little, or to be gathering his wrath for that awful day when “it shall burn as an oven.” To us it appears that this view of things is

equally opposed to reason and experience, equally contradicted by philosophy and observation. In our judgment the argument ought to be reversed, and the rewards and punishments of the future life instead of militating against the doctrine of a present retribution, ought to be regarded as a valid reason from analogy in proof of the existence of such a plan. There is an identity in the character of God to such a degree, that he is no wise affected by the lapse of time and the revolutions of ages. He is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, a thousand years are to him as one day, one day is as a thousand years. Does not this feature of his moral nature authorize the supposition, that where there is no plain and incontrovertible reason for a charge of plan, it seems more natural that the same method should subsist? Does not the stability of the divine nature warrant men to imagine, that since justice is eminently manifested in the regulations of the future life, it must be exhibited more or less in the administration of the world as it is? Where one method will answer at the least as well, if not better than two methods, is it not due to what we know of the steadiness, simplicity, and economy of strength of the Supreme Ruler, to conceive that he adheres to one plan? Looking forward to the mechanism and arrangements of the future life, and perceiving God to exhibit himself therein under the aspect of a being, just, impartial and discerning, and bearing in mind how steadfast and immovable he is,—keeping in view, that we have no intimation from himself that he pursues two systems in the two kingdoms, is it not fair and reasonable to make use of the telescope of revelation, to transfer some part of the scenery of the future into the landscape of the present world, and to judge of things seen and temporal

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somewhat after the fashion of the things that are unseen and eternal? Moreover, God is remarkable not only for his justice, but also for his mercy and love. Forming the highest possible notion of these attributes, do they not seem to countenance the system which we advocate? If the righteous man is to receive in the world to come an inheritance of the most transcendent value, is it reasonable to think that the whole excellence of his portion is to be veiled and hidden from him throughout the entire period of the present life? Is it not more consonant to just views of God's wisdom to conceive that he should grant his faithful servant foretastes of the glory which is reserved for him, in order that by such glimpses his hope and trust might be increased, his exertions might be stimulated? Is it not more agreeable to right notions of the love and kindness of God, to suppose that he would delight from the very commencement of the engagement to give his sincere follower an earnest of the better things which are provided for him in the heavens?

If the wicked man is to be consigned over to a doom of unmixed and unending wretchedness after the few short years of his pilgrimage here are completed, is it natural to think that he is to walk without any previous preparation into the horrors of hot hell? Does it not rather harmonize with the wisdom of the Almighty to conceive, that he would afford the sinner loud and practical demonstrations to turn him from his evil ways, and to open his belief of the future punishments reserved for transgressors, by showing him what evils they draw down upon themselves even in the present life? Does it not also tally with the goodness and mercy of God to consider, that he would not permit even the worst of his wicked creatures to enter upon a miserable eternity,

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until he had first employed every possible means to convince him of the hatefulness of sin? And what method so efficacious as to teach him this truth in a practical manner, by letting him suffer under the effects of his iniquities? Thus, instead of looking at the regularity and justice of the next life, and concluding from this that it is natural that there should be an absence of such qualities in the administration of the present, it seems more reasonable to take the opposite view. It appears more consonant to abstract reason, more true to actual observation, more agreeable to God's wisdom, more in harmony with his goodness, to argue from the one world to the other, to assist reason by revelation, to fortify sight by faith, and to judge of things temporal by things eternal. And thus while we rest the main weight of the question upon other arguments more direct and more substantial,—whilst we found a system of present retribution chiefly upon the plain declarations of Scripture and the clear testimony of sight, it is not out of order that we should bring in the evidence of analogy, and judge of the present by what we are told of the future. To sum up what has been advanced,—the doctrine of a plan of present retribution is supported by the following considerations. God's Scriptures show that such a system did subsist during 4100 years, or more than two thirds of the whole period that has elapsed since the creation,—they prove the fact by precept and example, by inference or by direct statements. The argument that results from this has considerable weight. It is to this effect, that the strong probability is, that a plan which subsisted through so long a period, continues still, from the circumstance, that the likelihood is in favor of the continuance of that which has been, in the

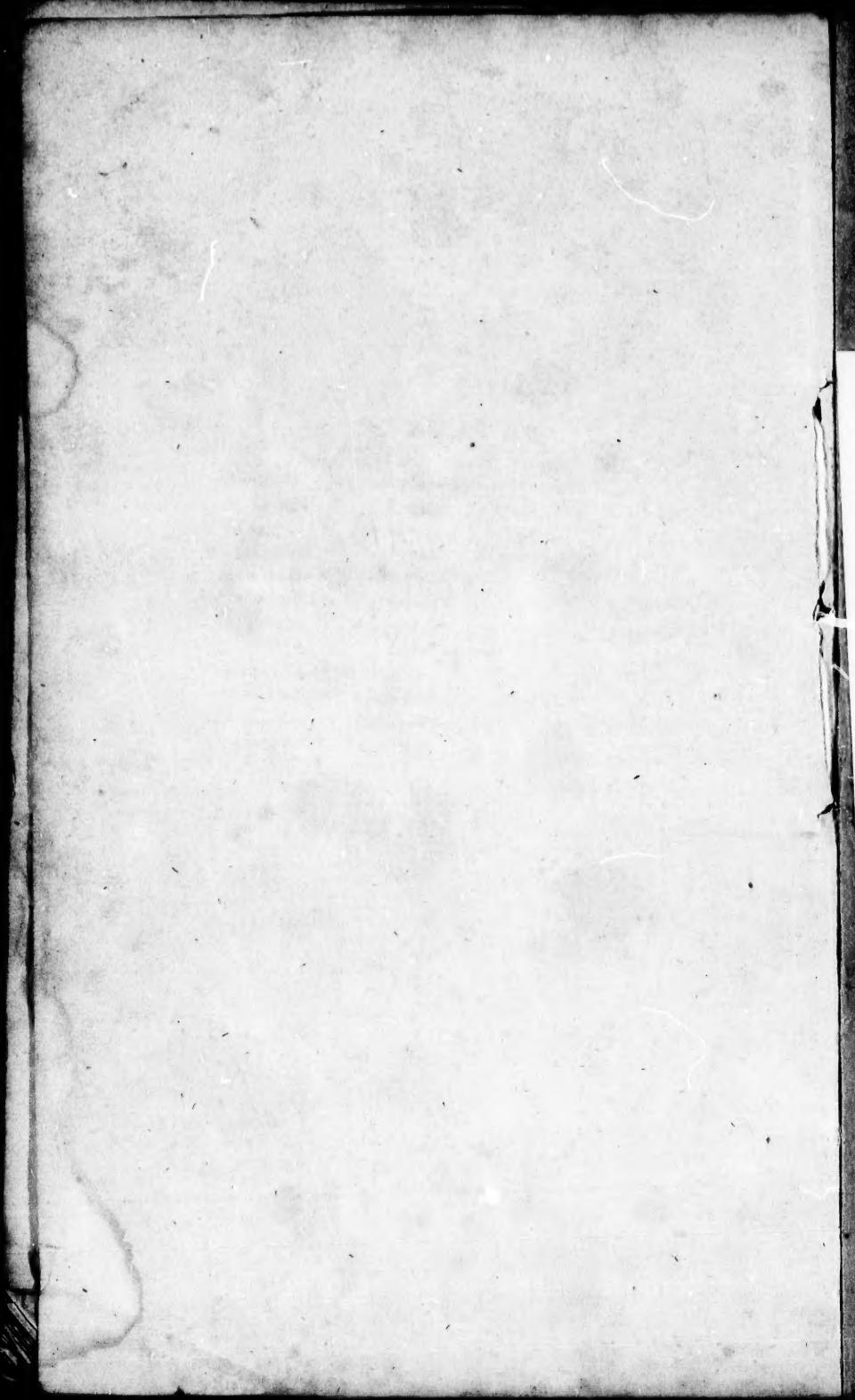
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absence of any valid reason for a change. Temporal retribution (considered to exist) is exercised by means of the influence of conscience, which applauds virtue and reprobates vice, and which, in the direct measure that it does so, may be regarded as the Almighty himself dispensing present rewards and chastisements to his creatures. It is further exercised through the medium of the voice of society, lauding that which seems good, and condemning that which seems evil, and which, in the exact degree that it follows the rule of truth in its verdict, may be regarded as the voice of Jehovah pronouncing praise or censure upon men. It is still further exercised by means of human courts and tribunals, which inflict punishments of various sorts upon offenders, and which, in the precise measure that they are regulated in their sentences by divine rules, may be looked upon as the judicatures wherein the Almighty himself sits judge, and executes present vengeance on transgressors. And again, it is exercised by means of the self-chastising tendency of iniquity,—a tendency which prevails in so high a degree, that it may be asserted with perfect correctness that each one of the numerous family of vice has a sting attached to it, wherewith it inflicts chastisement on the mind, or the person, or the outward fortune, and not seldom upon all at once. Finally, a system of present retribution is in our opinion rendered probable by the judicial regulations of the next life,—which, so far from making it unlikely that there should be a similar arrangement in the present life, seem rather to point to the opposite conclusion. Such are the arguments by which we have sought to vindicate, or the instances by which we have endeavored to illustrate the system in question. In a philoso-

phical point of view the subject is interesting and curious. What can be more so than this chapter of theology too little explored, which seeks to point out the closest connection between Jehovah and his moral universe? But in a religious and practical aspect, it is hardly possible to state how valuable and how important it ought to be esteemed. It is thought an interesting employment to survey God's character in his material universe, to trace his finger therein in things great and in things small, in the revolutions of the planets, or in the structure of an insect. Such studies are considered to be conducive to wisdom and to holiness,—and so they are. Surely it ought to be still more productive of wisdom, to scan the workmanship of his moral kingdom,—to analyze and to arrange those facts and events which prove him to be minutely attentive to the conduct of his rational creatures. Surely it ought to be eminently conducive to holiness to seat Jehovah on the tribunal of this earth; to see him dispensing the rewards and punishments of the present life; to notice at every turn the Scripture fulfilled, that "godliness is profitable to all things;" and to collect, along the whole length and breadth of the moral universe, fresh facts and arguments, in powerful confirmation of the text,—"Be sure your sin will find you out."

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## E R R A T A :

Title Page—A. M. inserted by mistake.

Page 12, 8 lines from bottom for exaltation, read exultation.

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| 14, 4  | " | "      | older       | " | olden.      |
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| 32, 4  | " | top    | so there is | " | so true is. |
| 34, 3  | " | bottom | blows       | " | blow.       |
| 60, 3  | " | top    | to explain  | " | to canvass. |
| 61, 5  | " | bottom | him for     | " | for him.    |
| 62, 15 | " | "      | continual   | " | continuous. |
| 67, 6  | " | "      | open        | " | strengthen. |